

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 230401Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9730
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JAKARTA 8418

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ID
SUBJECT: REMEMBERING SUKARNO

REF: JAKARTA 7659 (DTG 090-45Z JUN 78)

1. SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED RESURRECTION OF SUKARNO'S IMAGE REACHED A NEW PEAK JUNE 21, WITH OFFICIAL CEREMONIES AT THE SUKARNO GRAVESITE IN EAST JAVA AND A HIGHLY PUBLICIZED "PRIVATE" GATHERING OF SUKARNO FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN JAKARTA. ALI MURTOPO HAS INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH THE SUKARNO CAMPAIGN FOR ANOTHER YEAR. THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE IS OBVIOUS -- TO BUILD UP THE FORMER SUKARNOIST/PNI FORCES AS A MANIPULABLE COUNTERWEIGHT TO POLITICAL ISLAM. IT IS LESS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE EASILY TO TURN OFF THE GROWING NOSTALGIA FOR SUKARNO, IF IT BECOMES POLITICALLY DESIRABLE TO DO SO.
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END SUMMARY.

2. THE GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED EFFORT TO POLISH UP THE IMAGE OF FORMER PRESIDENT SUKARNO REACHED A NEW PEAK ON JUNE 21, THE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF SUKARNO'S DEATH. THE GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PROJECT TO REFURBISH THE SUKARNO GRAVESITE IN BLITAR, EAST JAVA, WAS INITIATED IN AN

OFFICIAL CEREMONY CONDUCTED BY EAST JAVA'S DEPUTY GOVERNOR AND ATTENDED BY MANY PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE EAST JAVA MILITARY COMMANDER MAJ. GEN. WITARMIN, ALTHOUGH THE CEREMONY ITSELF WAS BRIEF AND SIMPLE AND ATTENDANCE WAS OFFICIALLY LIMITED TO A FEW DOZEN, PRESS ACCOUNTS STATE THAT "TENS OF THOUSANDS" OF SPECTATORS SPONTANEOUSLY CONVERGED ON THE GAVESITE TO WITNESS THE PROCEEDINGS, SOME COMING FROM AS FAR AWAY AS KALIMANTAN. (NOTE: ONE CENTRAL JAVA DISTRICT CHIEF WHO PASSED THROUGH JAKARTA SEVERAL WEEKS AGO TOLD US A MAJOR UNDERGROUND EFFORT WAS THEN UNDERWAY TO ASSEMBLE A BIG CROWD IN BLITAR AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T SUPPRESS IT.)

3. THE PRECEDING WEEK IN BLITAR, WHERE HOTELS AND PRIVATE HOMES WERE OVERFLOWING WITH VISITORS, THERE WAS A SERIES OF LARGE, ELABORATE PARTIES AND GATHERINGS TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF SUKARNO. THE ROLE OF PEARL MESTA OF BLITAR WAS ASSUMED BY SUKARNO'S OLDER SISTER WARDOYO, WHO ENLISTED THE SERVICES OF 60 MUSLIM RELIGIOUS TEACHERS TO PRAY FOR THE SOUL OF HER DEPARTED BROTHER AND SEVERAL BANDS AND DANCING TROOPS TO CATER TO THOSE OF A LESS RELIGIOUS BENT. DESPITE THE CROWDS, THERE WERE NO UNTOWARD INCIDENTS IN BLITAR, THOUGH ACCORDING TO THE SUKARNOIST LEANING JAKARTA DAILY MERDEKA A CRISIS WAS ONLY NARROWLY AVOIDED WHEN WARDOYO THREATENED A HUNGER

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STRIKE IN RESPONSE TO A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO RESTRICT CELEBRATORY DANCING AT THE OFFICIAL CEREMONY. A COMPROMISE WAS REACHED PERMITTING SOME DANCERS TO PERFORM BEFORE THE CEREMONY, AND WARDOYO WAS ABLE TO RETURN TO HER FEED.

4. MEANWHILE IN JAKARTA, A SEPARATE FAMILY CLIQUE COMPRISING MOSTLY WIVES AND CHILDREN OF THE EX-PRESIDENT HASTILY LAID ON THEIR OWN "PRIVATE" CEREMONY JUNE 21, APPARENTLY MIFFED AT NOT BEING OFFICIALLY INVITED TO THE BLITAR EVENT. A LARGE CROWD GATHERED, FILLING TO OVERFLOW THE HOME OF SUKARNO'S NUMBER-ONE WIDOW FATMAWATI. AMONG THE PROMINENT CELEBRANTS WERE MINISTER OF INFORMATION ALI MURTOPO, FORMER JAAARTA GOVERNOR ALI SADIKIN, VICE CHAIRMAN OF PARLIAMENT MOHAMAD ISNAENI (OFFICIALLY REPRESENTING THE INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY PARTY, PDI) AND HEAD OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE STAFF JOOP AVE (SUHARTO'S "OFFICIAL" REPRESENTATIVE). BESIDES HOSTESS FATMAWATI, THE CENTER OF ATTENTION MOST OF THE EVENING WAS SUKARNO'S SON GUNTUR, WHO HAS INCREASINGLY BECOME THE SPOKESMAN OF SUKARNO FAMILY INTERESTS.

5. BEFORE ENTERING THE PARTY, MURTOPO TOLD THE PRESS THAT IT WAS APPROPRIATE THAT SUKARNO BE FAVORABLY

REMEMBERED AS A "PROCLAMATOR OF INDONESIAN INDEPENDENCE"
AND A TRUE NATIONALIST. THERE WAS NO POINT, SAID MURTOPO,
IN DELVING FURTHER INTO THE EVENTS SURROUNDING
SUKARNO'S LAST YEARS. MURTOPO INDICATED THAT, WHILE
PRESIDENT SUHARTO WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY SUKARNO
CEREMONIES THIS YEAR, HE DID PLAN TO BE ON HAND ON
JUNE 21, 1979, WHEN THE REFURBISHED BLITAR GRAVESITE
WOULD BE OFFICIALLY REOPENED. IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION
WITH THE AMBASSADOR LAST WEEK, MURTOPO HAD CITED THE
SAME DATE AS THE TERMINAL DATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S
CURRENT CAMPAIGN TO PARTIALLY REHABILITATE SUKARNO'S
IMAGE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 JAKARTA 8418

6. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE IN FOSTERING
THE SUKARNO CAMPAIGN IS OBVIOUS -- TO BUILD UP IN A
CONTROLLED WAY THE REMNANTS OF THE SUKARNO CONSTITUENCY,
MOST OF WHOM ARE NOW HOUSED IN THE PDI, AS A COUNTER-
WEIGHT TO THE GROWING STRENGTH OF POLITICALLY ORGANIZED
ISLAM. THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT EARLY THIS YEAR TO GAIN
FIRM CONTROL OF THE PDI CAN BE READ AS A PREREQUISITE
STAGE OF THE NEO-SUKARNO CAMPAIGN, INTENDED TO INSURE A
FIRM PALACE GRIP ON WHAT IS PROJECTED TO BECOME A STRONGER
IMPLICITLY ANTI-MUSLIM PDI.

7. THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, MAY FIND THE SUKARNO

CAMPAIGN MUCH HARDER TO TURN OFF THAT IT WAS TO INCITE.
THE OUTPOURING OF PEOPLE IN BLITAR AND THE ENORMOUS PRESS
COVERAGE OF THE EVENTS OF JUNE 21 SUGGEST THE EMOTIONAL
APPEAL STILL INHERENT IN THE SUKARNO PHENOMENON, WHICH
SOME WILL TRY TO TURN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, AS THE
ABOVE MENTIONED DISCTRICK CHIEF IMPLIED. IF THE SUKARNO
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GENIE STRAYS TOO FAR FROM THE BOTTLE, EVEN ALI MURTOPO
MAY HAVE TROUBLE STUFFING HIM BACK IN.
MASTERS

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